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'GAUTAM GAMBHIR FOUNDATION HOARDED COVID DRUG FABIFLU'

Delhi govt's drug controller told the Delhi HC that the Foundation bought and distributed the Covid medicine without a licence

CAUSED INCONVENIENCE TO PATIENTS: DELHI HC

The HC was hearing a PIL alleging politicians procure huge quantities of Covid drugs even as patients were running from pillar to post to get them. The bench noted that while the BJP MP did a lot of charity, he also caused inconvenience to patients. The HC directed that action be taken against the Foundation as well as others who made unauthorised sales

AAP MLA, TOO, GUILTY OF SIMILAR OFFENCE

- The court, however, ordered that no action be taken against those purchasing drugs on the black market out of desperation
- AAP MLA Praveen Kumar has also been found guilty for similar offences under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and action will be taken against him, the court was informed

2,628

STRIPS OF FABIFLU WERE BOUGHT USING A DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION

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Lockdown now till June 14, more sectors to get relief

CM announces additional Rs 500 crore for weavers, ASHA workers

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday announced an extension of the lockdown in the state by one week. At a press conference, Yediyurappa said the existing restrictions will continue to remain in place till 6 am on June 14, effectively extending the lockdown by a week.

In addition, he also announced additional schemes under the economic relief package. Cash incentives for fishermen, weavers, Anganwadi workers, teachers, priests and clerics, etc, electricity bill subsidies for MSMEs and other industries have been announced at an estimated cost of Rs 500 crore, the CM announced.

"Fresh Covid-19 cases have reduced, but the infection rate is still high. As per experts' advice, it has been decided to extend the current lockdown by a week," the CM said, reiterating that the regulations along with all addendums will continue.

On Wednesday, the State Government had passed an order allowing export-oriented units to function at 50 per cent capacity. "In my opinion, if the test positivity rate reduces to under 5 per cent, we will withdraw all restrictions and lift the lockdown, but people have to cooperate," the CM added, urging people to adhere to guidelines for another week.

Following requests from various quarters as well as demands from the opposition, the Karnataka Government added a few more financial assistance schemes to help those affected by the lockdown. The new announcements come in addition to the Rs 1,250 crore economic package that was announced in May. "An additional Rs 500 crore package is being announced today. Assistance of Rs 3,000 to weavers in power looms with a cap of two persons will be given at an estimated cost of Rs 35 crore. Registered and unorganised sector workers in the film and teleserial industry will receive Rs 3,000 per person as aid. The scheme is expected to benefit 22,000 workers at a cost of Rs 6.6 crore," Yediyurappa said.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Traffic Police personnel keep an eye on motorists to catch those who venture out without valid documents during the lockdown in Bengaluru, on Thursday | SHESHADRI S

KARNATAKA	JUNE 2	JUNE 3
Fresh cases	16,387	18,324
Recoveries	21,199	24,036
Deaths	463	514

WIDENING RELIEF NET

Additional **₹500 crore** economic package

- ₹3,000 for powerloom weavers (cap of two persons per powerloom)
- ₹3,000 for unorganised, but registered workers in films, teleserials
- ₹3,000 for fishermen registered under Centre's savings-cum-relief scheme
- ₹3,000 for inland boat owners
- ₹3,000 for priests and temple staff of C-category temples under Muzrai Dept; for clerks and staff at madrasas
- ₹3,000 for ASHA workers
- ₹2,000 for anganwadi workers and helpers
- ₹5,000 for teachers of unaided schools
- Half kg milk powder in June and July for school kids as part of midday meal kit
- ₹5 crore for advocates' welfare fund
- Waiver of fixed charges on electricity for MSMEs for May and June
- Extension for payment of electricity bills for non-MSME industries till July

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 2	JUNE 3
Fresh cases	1,32,788	1,34,154
Recoveries	2,31,456	2,11,499
Deaths	3,207	2,887

JAB-O-METER — TAKE YOUR SHOT

June 2: **22,45,112 doses**
June 3: **26,24,971 doses**
TOTAL DOSES: 22,37,27,532

Services activity shrinks to 8-month low in May

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ACTIVITY in India's services sector, which contributes the most to the country's economy, contracted in May as reintroduction of Covid restrictions across the country dented demand, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The Nikkei/IHS Markit Services Purchasing Managers' Index fell to an eight-month low of 46.4 in May from 54.0 in April, sliding below the 50-level by a big margin. An index below 50 means contraction.

The dismal performance of the services sector, the worst in eight months, was accentuated by a drastic fall in new business orders, which forced companies to cut jobs at the fastest pace since October.

Despite active Covid cases falling, localised lockdowns in many states have kept the services activities low.

"While PMI data released at the start of the month showed that the manufacturing industry managed to keep its head above water in May, the services sector struggled as the pandemic escalated," noted Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit. "The intensification of the Covid-19 crisis and associated restrictions suppressed domestic and international demand for Indian services," she added.

The survey highlighted that the overall demand contracted at the sharpest rate since August with foreign demand shrinking at the fastest pace since November.

A disturbing finding of the survey was that services companies are pessimistic about this quarter's growth prospects as many firms intensified job cuttings. Decline in business expectation, according to the survey, may force firms to cut jobs further in the coming months.

Last year also, the services sector had pushed thousands of people out of work.

HIGH DEMAND FOR MGNREGA WORK

Demand for work under the rural job scheme has shot up in the past two months, data from the MGNREGA portal show. In March, 3.36 crore people opted for rural work; this zoomed to 3.52 crore in May and 3.61 cr in April | P12

SC quashes sedition case against Dua

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday quashed a sedition case against senior journalist Vinod Dua filed in Himachal Pradesh, saying a citizen has a right to criticise or comment upon measures taken by a government and its functionaries so long as he does not incite people to indulge in violence or create public disorder.

The verdict comes days after another SC bench decided to examine the interpretation of sedition law, particularly on media rights and free speech.

Sedition charges were slapped on Dua last year following his talk show criticising the Modi government's handling of the Covid lockdown. But a bench led by Justice U U Lalit noted that Dua's statements could at best be termed as disapprobation of actions of the government so as to get the situation addressed quickly.

"They were certainly not made with the intent to incite people... The petitioner was within the permissible limits laid down in the decision of this court in Kedar Nath Singh. It may be that certain factual details...were not completely correct...," the bench said. P9

EXPRESS READ

Manipal acquires Vikram Hospital

Bengaluru: In its second major acquisition this year, the Manipal Hospitals on Thursday announced the acquisition of Bengaluru-based Vikram Hospital for ₹350 crore. | P12

Bharat Biotech gets nod for vax production

Bengaluru: Bharat Biotech on Thursday got approval from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board to start Covaxin production at the Bharat Biovet unit in Malur, near Bengaluru. | P4

Mysuru city corporation chief quits, blames DC

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

HIGH drama was witnessed in the city on Thursday when Mysuru City Corporation Commissioner Shilpa Nag called an emergency press conference to announce her resignation, while accusing Mysuru Deputy Commissioner Rohini Sindhuri of harassment and highhandedness. However, the latter has denied the charges.

Though the running feud between the DC and the Corporation commissioner was known in official circles, Shilpa's decision to announce her resignation caught the city administration and the citizens off guard. Shilpa Nag, a 2014 batch IAS officer and a native of Hassan, stole the limelight by setting up the Covid Mitra with the help of volunteers, introducing triaging and tele-consultation services alongside preparing for the third wave.

Shilpa Nag announces her resignation in Mysuru on Thursday | UDAYSHANKARS

In tears, Shilpa read out her resignation letter, addressed to Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar. She alleged that the DC has waged a war against the City Corporation that has hurt her and also her subordinates. Only two wards in Mysuru City Corporation were in the Red zone, whereas the DC has given a report that all wards in Mysuru City are red, which sent a wrong signal against the Corporation, the Commissioner, officers and also elected representatives, hurting their morale, she said. P5

ADVANCE PAYMENT TO BLOCK 30 CRORE BIOLOGICAL E DOSES

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Centre on Thursday announced advance payment of ₹1,500 crore to Hyderabad-based vaccine maker Biological E for procuring its Covid vaccine, still under phase 3 clinical trials, marking its first such jab deal.

The government had entered into purchase agreements with Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech only after their shots had received regulatory approvals.

The advance payment is to secure 30 crore doses of the vaccine candidate, which is a foreign construct, being produced in India.

The candidate consists of an antigen developed by Texas Children's Hospital Centre for Vaccine Development, in-licensed from BCM Ventures, Baylor College of Medicine's integrated commercialization team, along with Dynavax Technologies — all in the US.

The Centre said the vaccine candidate is currently undergoing phase 3 clinical trials after showing promising results in phases 1 and 2, whose details are yet to be published in a peer reviewed scientific journal. The vaccine, based on RBD protein subunit — had been tested in about 360 people between November and April in early-stage trials and has got approvals for late-stage trials in 1,268 volunteers in the 18-80 age group.

BOARD EXAMS

STATE'S DECISION TODAY

Students and parents have been demanding that the Class 10 and 12 board exams should be cancelled this year as done by a few other states | P2

GOOGLE SLAMMED

Kannada search reference raises online storm

ASHWINI M SRIPAD & ARUNKUMAR HURALIMATH @ Bengaluru, Hubballi

KANNADIGAS in the state, across the country and even overseas, were in for a rude shock on Thursday when they found out that a search for the "ugliest language in India" on the popular search engine Google was throwing up the name of Kannada.

Word spread quickly on different social media platforms and cyber warriors got busy, reporting the search result as 'hateful, racist or offensive' on the page. Netizens slammed Google and Sundar Pichai, the CEO of its parent company Alphabet, demanding an apology and to remove it from the search. The Karnataka Government too went to extent warning the internet giant of legal action.

Non-Kannadigas too joined in saying that a language spoken by more than 43 million across the globe cannot be termed so and demanded that the search engine look into the issue. Many people posted on social media about the history of the language and how Kannada writers had made immense contributions to literature. Some YouTubers also came up with videos about the importance of the language.

After facing severe backlash through the day, the search engine removed the reference by evening. Late on Thursday, Google India even put out an apology.

CONTINUED ON: P2

43 million speakers

Spoken by about 43 million people, Kannada is a Scheduled Language in India and has history dating back to earlier than the 5th century. It is also listed among the classical languages.

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